

STRAY NOTES CONCERNING ITALY.

BY JAMES V. ROSCOE, (ENGLAND.)

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice.—The history of this city, so favored by art, has called forth many poems, in all languages; among which one of the most celebrated is Byron's drama, taken from the story of Marino Faliero, who, being elevated to the ducal throne of Venice, conceived the ambitious idea of making himself its sole ruler. After nine months more had passed away, the plot began fermenting. The first person to whom he communicated his treasonable intention was the admiral of the arsenal. He then sent for several nearly-allied members of his own family, and succeeded in interesting them in the scheme. A great many of the most influential citizens were also made to bear parts in the conspiracy, which was so secretly carried out, that the whole affair was not divulged until a few hours before the time appointed for the outbreak; when one Beltramo Bergamasco, having heard what was going on, betook himself to the house of his lord, Ser Niccolo Lioni, of Santo Stefano, and told him all he knew. Upon which, to prevent farther mischief, Ser Niccolo locked up his informant, and went to consult with other dignitaries of the city. The result of this fortunate communication was the hanging, a few days after, of the persons most deeply implicated, and the beheading of the recreant duke.

"On Friday, the sixteenth day of April, judgment was also given, in the aforesaid Council of Ten, that my Lord Marino Faliero, the Duke, should have his head cut off, and that the execution should be done on the landing-place of the stone staircase, where the Dukes take their oath when they first enter the palace. On the following day, the seventeenth of April, the doors of the palace being shut, the Duke had his head cut off, about the hour of noon. And the cap of estate

was taken from the Duke's head before he came down stairs. When the execution was over, it is said that one of the Council of Ten went to the columns of the palace over against the place of St. Mark, and that he showed the bloody sword unto the people, crying out, with a loud voice—"The terrible doom hath fallen upon the traitor!" and the doors were opened, and the people all rushed in, to see the corpse of the Duke who had been beheaded. * * * * *

After the traitors had been hanged, and the Duke had had his head cut off, the state remained in great tranquillity and peace."

The Latin epistles of Petrarch demonstrate that Marino Faliero was an intimate friend of that great poet, who has described him as being possessed of more courage than conduct: "*Piu di corraggio che di senno.*" With all his faults, many of which appear to have had their origin in the latter part of his career, Faliero is said by Petrarch to have sustained a reputation for much wisdom, which, but for the closing act of his existence, he might have retained to his dying day. Byron says:—"From historical notes which I have collected, it may be inferred that Marino Faliero possessed many of the qualities, but not the success of a hero; and that his passions were too violent." It is somewhat remarkable, (and a circumstance which we have not before heard spoken of,) that the same description will apply, with an almost degree of truth, to Lord Byron himself.

Ariosto and the Potter.—If any Italian city has a claim to the title of the Home of Genius, Ferrara is that one, for within her "time-honored" walls have been conceived some of the most immortal achievements in the departments of Poetry and Art. Travel-

ers turn their steps toward this favored place, as pilgrims journeying toward some holy shrine. It is, indeed, a rare privilege, to be permitted to wander over scenes rendered immortal by minds like those of Tasso and Ariosto; to meditate in the same cell which once confined the emaciated figure of the author of the *Jerusalem Liberata*; to meditate in the same garden whose paths were consecrated by the feet of Ariosto, centuries ago! No wonder that we experience so much enthusiasm when dwelling upon so sublime a theme!

During the height of Ariosto's fame, in sauntering, one day, through a narrow street in the suburbs of Ferrara, he chanced to approach the door of a poor potter, who was amusing himself by singing one of the great poet's sonnets before a group of neighbors. Ariosto drew still nearer, and, grieved and mortified to hear one of his most beautiful compositions thus mutilated, in a fit of rage, he seized a superb vase which the potter was finishing, and dashed it in fifty fragments upon the ground. Enraged at the loss of his vase, the potter turned sharply upon Ariosto, and demanded the cause of the outrage:

"Idiot!" exclaimed Ariosto, passionately, "I have only destroyed a shapeless mass of clay, which may be replaced, at any time, by a few sestertii; but thy rude tongue has mutilated one of the most magnificent of my productions!"

We suppose the poet remunerated the potter for the damage he had done him, but our authority is silent upon this subject.

Dante and Petrarca.—The ingratitude of republics was never more clearly manifested than in the case of Dante, of whom Byron, from the best authorities, has derived the subjoined account:—

"Dante was born in Florence, in the year 1261. He fought in two battles, was fourteen times ambassador, and once prior of the republic. When the party of Charles of Anjou triumphed over the Bianchi, he was absent on an embassy to Pope Boniface VIII., and was condemned to two years' banishment, and to a fine of eight thousand lire; on the non-payment of which he was further punished by the sequestration of all his property. The republic, however, was not content with this satisfaction, for in 1272 was discovered, in the archives at Florence, a sentence, in which Dante is the eleventh of a list of fifteen, condemned, in 1302, to be burnt alive. The pretext for this judgment was a proof of unfair barter, extortions, and illicit gains; and with such an accusation, it is not strange that Dante should have always protested his innocence, and the injustice of his fellow-citizens. His appeal to Florence was accompanied by another to the Emperor Henry, and the death of that sovereign, in 1313, was the signal for a sentence of irrevocable banishment. He had before lingered near Tuscany, with hopes of a recall, then traveled into the north of Italy, where Verona had to boast of his longest residence, and he finally settled at Ravenna, which was his ordinary, but not constant abode, until his death. The refusal of the Venetians to grant him a public audience, on the part of Guido Novello da Polenta, his protector, is said to have been the principal cause of this event, which happened in 1321. He was buried at Ravenna, in a handsome tomb, which was erected by Guido, restored by Bernardo Bembo, in 1488, prætor for that republic which had refused to hear him, again restored by Cardinal Corsi, in 1692, and replaced by a more magnificent sepulchre, constructed, in 1780, at

the expense of the Cardinal Luigi Valenti Gonzaga.

"The offence or misfortune of Dante was an attachment to a defeated party, and, as his least favorable biographers allege against him, too great a freedom of speech and haughtiness of manner. But the next age paid honors almost divine to the exile. The Florentines, having in vain and frequently attempted to recover his body, crowned his image in a church, and his picture is still one of the idols of their cathedral. They struck medals—they raised statues to him. The cities of Italy, not being able to dispute about his own birth, contended for that of his great poem, and the Florentines thought it for their honor to prove that he had finished the seventh canto before they drove him from his native city. Fifty-one years after his death, they endowed a professional chair for the expounding of his verses, and Boccaccio was appointed to this patriotic employment. The example was imitated by Bologna and Pisa, and the commentators, if they performed but little service to literature, augmented the veneration which beheld a sacred or moral allegory in all the images of his mystic muse. His birth and his infancy were discovered to have been distinguished above those of ordinary men; the author of the *Decameron*, his earliest biographer, relates that his mother was warned, in a dream, of the importance of her pregnancy: and it was found, by others, that at ten years of age he had manifested his precocious passion for that wisdom or theology which, under the name of Beatrice, had been mistaken for a substantial mistress.

"When the *Divine Comedy* had been recognised as a mere mortal production, and at the distance of two centuries, when criticism and competition had sobered the judgment of Italians, Dante was seriously declared superior to Homer, and though the preference appeared to some casuists 'a heretical blasphemy, worthy of the flames,' the contest was vigorously maintained for nearly fifty years. In later times, it was made a question which of the lords of Verona could boast of having patronized him; and the jealous scepticism of one writer would not allow Ravenna the undoubted possession of his bones. Even the critical Tiraboschi was inclined to believe that the poet had foreseen and foretold one of the discoveries of Galileo. Like the great originals of other nations, his popularity has not always maintained the same level. The last age seemed inclined to undervalue him as a model and a study; and Bettinelli one day rebuked his pupil, Monti, for poring over the harsh and obsolete extravagancies of the *Commedia*. The present generation, having recovered from the Gallic idolatries of Cesarotti, has returned to the ancient worship, and the *Danteaggire* of the northern Italians is thought even indiscreet by the more moderate Tuscans."

Dante, however, was well remunerated for the trials he had undergone, when he was no longer conscious of friends or enemies. Not a great while after his death, the Florentines, becoming jealous of the honors paid to the poet's memory by the people of Ravenna, thought proper to assert their claim to a participation in them, and, although they could not possess his remains, they embraced every other means of testifying their sense of the worth and talents of the illustrious deceased. The Florentines are not so much to blame, however, when we take into consideration the fact, that it is in this manner the world acquits itself of its obligations to those who have rendered it a service. Had the people of Ravenna not thought fit to make

some manifestation of the appreciation in which Danté was held by them, it is probable the remains of the poet might have slumbered in oblivion to this day. But such was not the case; and to preserve themselves from ridicule, as well as to lay claim to a legacy which was not justly their due, the tardy Florentines set themselves to making statues and coining medals to the deceased—as if this reluctant species of glorification could have atoned for the injuries which they had inflicted upon its object, while living. This, too, at a time when both literature and art were in the meridian of their glory.

"Ungrateful Florence! Danté sleeps afar,
Like Scipio, buried by the upbraiding shore;
Thy factions, in their worse than civil war,
Proscribed the bard whose name forevermore
Their children's children would in vain adore
With the remorse of ages; and the crown
Which Petrarch's laureate brow supremely wore,
Upon a far and foreign soil had grown,
His life, his fame, his grave, though rifed—not thine own!"

CHILDE HAROLD.

A similar species of injustice was shown to Petrarch, and was followed by a similar result; although in this instance the spirit of atonement, from selfish motives, was manifested toward the living. Petrarch was found to be useful to the Florentines, in the formation of their University, and he was accordingly solicited to return; every favor that he might see fit to desire being, at the same time, promised him. But Petrarch, too, had experienced the injustice of republics, and he sturdily resisted all their entreaties.

Boccaccio's Enemies.—The licentiousness displayed by Boccaccio in certain of his writings, has called forth some very severe animadversions on the parts, not only of ancient, but modern, authors. This virulence Lord Byron very properly rebukes; attributing the great outcry made, during Boccaccio's lifetime, not to the indignation of a community whose morals had been outraged, but to the malice of those whose misdeeds the writer had made the subject-matter of his works. Great abuses, no doubt, existed among the priesthood, as well as the nobility; and the exposure of these abuses, while it excited, in many instances, the laughter, only, of the titled class, called forth, on the part of the priesthood, the most summary demonstrations of vengeance. However all this may be, one thing is certain—Boccaccio's after life amply atoned for all his more juvenile derelictions.

Athenodorus, a Roman Philosopher.—Among the philosophers whose writings and counsels have assisted in making Rome famous, was Athenodorus, who flourished during the reign of the Emperor Augustus. He was by birth a native of Cilicia, but lived for a long while at Rome, during which he enjoyed the Emperor's friendship and protection, and became, at last, so great a favorite, that many of his bolder sayings were passed by in silence, which, if another tongue had uttered them, would have been the means of silencing that tongue for ever. The subjoined anecdote will illustrate the footing on which he stood with the Emperor. It is said that a friend of Athenodorus, having a wife whose beauty had drawn upon her the admiration of Augustus, the latter had privately given orders that she should be summoned to his palace. Knowing the philosopher's influence with the Emperor, the distracted husband besought the former to use his influence in the preservation of his wife, which Athenodorus promised to do. He accordingly found an oppor-

tunity of substituting himself, instead of the lady, in the chair which had conveyed her to the palace, and when the Emperor, full of expectation, advanced towards him, he sprang from behind the curtains, and, brandishing a sword, commanded him to renounce the lady or his life. Whether from affright at the furious demand of Athenodorus, or a timely compunction of conscience, Augustus gave the required promise, and took no offence at the conduct of his favorite.

Athenodorus wrote a great deal concerning the ocean, and its tides, and is supposed to have written a history of his own country, which, in common with all his works, has perished. The acquisition of Athenodorus among the number of his friends and followers, was one of Cato's greatest boasts. He deemed it of greater consequence than a victory.

Although a tyrant, and a crafty man in the pursuit of his own interest, Augustus rendered his country some service by dispersing the mists of superstition which had for so long a time been gathered about the spot known, to modern Italians, as the Lago d'Averno,* and mentioned by Virgil in the following extract:

"Deep was the cave, and downward as it went
From the wide mouth, a rocky, rough descent;
And here th' access a gloomy grove defends,
And here the innavigable lake extends,
O'er whose unhappy waters—void of light—
No bird presumes to steer his airy flight;
Such deadly stench from the depth arise,
And steaming sulphur that infects the skies;
From hence the Grecian bards their legends make,
And give the name *Æternus* to the lake."

This once dreaded sheet of water—the entrance to the *Hades* of the ancients—has been the subject of much controversy among authors, of all generations, and the pen of Boccaccio, as well as Virgil, has aided in rendering it immortal. The associations connected with it give a greater interest, from the fact that here, in one of the gloomy caves adjacent, Virgil located the habitation of the Cumæan Sybil, whose votaries were said to assemble, at midnight, for the purpose of celebrating their orgies, and offering sacrifices to the infernal deities.

Introduction of Engraving.—The intimate connection which subsists between Literature and Art does not appear to be a natural consequence of the ultimate arrival at perfection of one or both; for, on reference to old books upon the subject, we find that, as early as 1418, a copy of Dante's "*Inferno*" was published at Florence, with plates illustrative of the letter press—the designs being original with Alessandro Botichelli, and the mechanical portion by Niccolò della Magna (or Niccolò Lorenzo della Magna): said book being the second one which had ever appeared in Italy with plates. We believe that fac similes of these engravings still exist in a German work, by Baron Heincken. At the time this copy of the *Inferno* was published, the art of engraving was considered by the Italians as an Italian invention; whether through coincidence or wilful misrepresentation can only be conjectured, as the art had long been known and practised in Germany, whence it was probably imported by some traveling designer.

One of the pioneers in engraving was Marc Antonio,

* Lake Averno, situated near Fuszuoli, province of Terra di Lavoro, called sometimes Lago di Tipergola.

who first drew breath at the city of Bologna, about the year 1483, where, instructed by an artist of some celebrity, named Raibolini, he entered upon his career as a painter. At this time Italy abounded with artists of all kinds—in fact, she was more bountifully supplied with them than with poets. Scarcely a single event worthy of being commemorated took place, that was not made a subject for the quill or the pencil. Antonio had ambition—perseverance—energy: all of the requisites, in fact, which were considered necessary to complete success in his laborious profession. After toiling for some years in his native city, where, beside his efforts in another branch of art, he executed several engravings of rare merit, he conceived the idea of improving himself by travel, and betook himself to Venice—then in the acmé of her military and civil glory. From the date of one of his earliest essays at engraving (1502,) Antonio must have been exceedingly young for so promising a pupil. He was only 14 when he etched *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Arrived in Venice, the young artist was attracted by several wood-cuts by Albert Durer, which had just appeared, and were drawing considerable notice. Having taken copies of these on copper, which were so closely imitated as to deceive even competent judges, and the copies being sold as originals, the circumstance reached the ears of Durer, who forthwith proceeded to Venice, where he instituted a suit against Antonio.

The celebrity which had crowned the efforts of Michael Angelo and Raphael at Rome, now induced Antonio to turn his attention toward that city, whither he shortly afterward went, and where, by his diligence and industry, he drew upon himself the favorable notice of influential persons. Two plates which he there executed, *Lucretia stabbing herself*, and the *Judgment of Paris*, (both, we believe, from designs by Raphael, who employed him to engrave from his designs soon after his arrival in the city,) were so well done as to give him a reputation immediately. He at length became so celebrated, that many young artists, both Italian and German, were drawn to Rome, for the sake of profiting by his instructions—none of them, however, sufficiently celebrated to deserve naming. At the demise of Raphael, which occurred in 1520, Aretino, a poet on intimate terms with Titian—in whose correspondence he is frequently mentioned as a boon companion—wrote some questionable verses, which Antonio set himself at work to illustrate, and for his trouble was cast into prison by Pope Clement VII., from whence he was, however, with difficulty released by Cardinal Giulio di Medici, and Bandelli, the sculptor.

It is a somewhat singular fact, that most of the eminent poets and artists of Italy were constantly getting themselves into all kinds of trouble; sometimes through the malice of persons in high places, whom they had offended; sometimes through jealousy; and often for participating in intrigues with the members of powerful families: as in the case of Tasso, whose love drew upon his head the inextinguishable fury of the Lord of Este.

As one standing in the front rank of artists, the name of Marc Antonio is too little known among artists generally; probably from the fact that but few of his works remain to perpetuate his memory.

It was about this period that the species of engraving now termed *stipple* was introduced.

Salvator's Adventure with the Brigands.—There is in Italy hardly a spot of ground unconsecrated by the footprints of genius. Among other traditions which

have been handed down to us, that of Salvator's adventure with the Brigands among the wilds of the Abruzzi, possesses a peculiar interest. The artist had gone forth, as was customary with him, to find among these rugged and almost impenetrable steeps, a subject for his pencil; for Salvator's delight was to delineate Nature in her grandest and most imposing forms. Clambering at noontide over huge rocks and by the verge of dangerous precipices, where one false motion of his foot would have hurled him headlong down the dark abyss, he was discovered and stopped by a party of mountain outlaws, who savagely commanded him to render up his money, or die. With the modest frankness which characterized him, he told them his name and profession; but they, disbelieving his assertions, and suspecting him to be a spy, notwithstanding the evidences of his profession which he always carried about him, were upon the point of hurling him from the summit of an overhanging crag, when one more humane, perhaps, than the rest, proposed that he should sketch the portraits of those around him; the fidelity with which he performed the task, being the ransom for his life. Salvator—gazing with a painter's delight upon the savage faces and sinewy forms before him—willingly agreed, and, producing his portfolio and implements, he set himself immediately at his task. The sun had not set, ere he had delineated the group, whom he placed in their proper attitudes for effect, and so naturally that they immediately liberated him, and gave him an escort to protect him until beyond those dangerous precincts. They acted unwisely, however, for we believe the recognition of one of the portraits was the means of their chieftain's capture, and ultimately of the dispersion of the band. The picture taken by Salvator, here mentioned, is still in existence, and engraved copies of it are yet in circulation.

Ugo and Parisina.—In the early part of the fifteenth century great preparations were being made in Venice to celebrate the advancement of Francesco Foscarelli to the ducal chair. All things were put in readiness, and already the people were filled with anticipation of the approaching festivities, when suddenly, there came an order from Foscarelli that the proceedings should be stopped, and the whole city was thrown into a fever of wonder, which, however, was soon dispelled, when the news was made public of the deaths of Ugo and Parisina, by command of the lord of Padua, whose family honor they had violated. The melancholy history of Parisina Malatesta, and her step-son, Ugo, has already become widely celebrated through Lord Byron's poem, and we are not sorry to be spared the necessity of repeating here a narrative of guilt and uncurbed passions which could only be productive of sickening sensations in the mind of the reader. Incidents like this are, happily for the world, of rare occurrence, and it can serve no beneficial purpose to recall them.

The Venetian Gondolieri were a class celebrated in many a fine old poem for their reckless gaiety and attachment to music. The poems of Dante, and Tasso, and Ariosto were always at their tongues' end, and the *Jeu de la Mort* was probably as well known on the quays and in the huts of the fishermen and lazaroni of Venice, as in the palaces of her nobility. But they have altered with Venice, it would seem, and Byron, while recalling the vanished glories of their craft, spoke only the truth, when he wrote the following:—

"In Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
And silent rows the songless gondoller ;
Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
And music meets not always now the ear :
Those days are gone—but beauty still is here.
States fall, arts fade—but Nature doth not die :
Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
The pleasant place of all festivity,
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy !"

Singular prophecy concerning Venice.—In these days of universal liberty and refinement, the idea of a prophecy being verified strikes us as a very great absurdity. Yet it is not a little remarkable that such things have been : whether by chance, or from the possession of an uncommon degree of wisdom and foresight on the parts of those who gave utterance to these said prophecies, we leave for more enlightened minds to determine. The subjoined paragraph occurs in the *Literary History of Italy*, by P. L. Ginguéné :

"There is one very singular prophecy concerning Venice : 'If thou dost not change,' it says to that proud republic, 'thy liberty, which is already on the wing, will not reckon a century more than the thousandth year.' If we carry back the epocha of Venetian freedom to the establishment of the government under which the republic flourished, we shall find that the date of the election of the first Doge is 697 ; and if we add one century to a thousand, that is, eleven hundred years, we shall find the sense of the prediction to be, literally, thus :—'Thy liberty will not last till 1797.'—Recollect that Venice ceased to be free in the year 1796, the fifth year of the French republic ; and you will perceive that there never was prediction more pointed or more exactly followed by the event."

Origin of the Mistletoe Bough.—Who that has not, from his school days upward, been familiar with that beautiful song, the Mistletoe Bough ? Many, no doubt, who can repeat the words by heart, look upon it as a pretty fiction, gotten up, as many such things are, for mere effect. Yet the heroine of this mournful little ballad actually lived, and her terrible fate is yet told to the sympathizing by the guides of ancient Modena, where Ginevra—that was her surname—lived and died. In Rogers' poem of Italy, Part I. verse xviii., the tragic history stands thus recorded :

"If ever you should come to Modena,
Stop at a Palace near the Reggio-gate,
Dwelt in of old by one of the Orsini.
Its noble gardens, terrace above terrace,
And rich in fountains, statues, cypresses,
Will long detain you—but, before you go,
Enter the house—forget it not, I pray you—
And look awhile upon a picture there.

'Tis of a Lady in her earliest youth,
The last of that illustrious family ;
Done by Zamperli—but by whom I care not.
He, who observes it—ere he passes on,
Gazes his fill, and comes and comes again,
That he may call it up, when far away.

She sits, inclining forward as to speak,
Her lips half open, and her finger up,
As tho' she said 'Beware !' her vest of gold
Brodered with flowers, and clasped from head to foot,
An emerald-stone in every golden clasp ;
And on her brow, fairer than alabaster,
A coronet of pearls.

But then her face,
So lovely, yet so arch, so full of mirth,
The overflowings of an innocent heart—

It haunts me still, tho' many a year has fled,
Like some wild melody !

Alone it hangs
Over a mouldering heir-loom, its companion,
An oaken-chest, half-eaten by the worm,
But richly carved by Antony of Trent
With scripture-stories from the Life of Christ ;
A chest that came from Venice and had held
The ducal robes of some old Ancestor—
That by the way—it may be true or false—
But don't forget the picture ; and you will not,
When you have heard the tale they told me there.

She was an only child—her name Ginevra,
The joy, the pride of an indulgent Father ;
And in her fifteenth year became a bride,
Marrying an only son, Francesco Doria,
Her playmate from her birth, and her first love.

Just as she looks there in her bridal dress,
She was all gentleness, all gaiety,
Her pranks the favorite theme of every tongue.
But now the day was come, the day, the hour ;
Now, frowning, smiling for the hundredth time,
The nurse, the ancient lady, preached decorum ;
And, in the lustre of her youth, she gave
Her hand, with her heart in it, to Francesco.

Great was the joy ; but at the Nuptial feast,
When all sate down, the Bride herself was wanting.
Nor was she to be found ! Her father cried,
'Tis but to make a trial of our love !'
And filled his glass to all ; but his hand shook,
And soon from guest to guest the panic spread.
'Twas but that instant she had left Francesco,
Laughing and looking back and flying still,
Her ivory tooth imprinted on his finger.
But now, alas, she was not to be found ;
Nor from that hour could any thing be guessed,
But that she was not !

Weary of his life,
Francesco flew to Venice, and, embarking,
Flung it away in battle with the Turk.
Orsini lived—and long might you have seen
An old man wandering as in quest of something,
Something he could not find—he knew not what.
When he was gone, the house remained awhile
Silent and tenantless—then went to strangers.

Full fifty years were past, and all forgotten,
When on an idle day, a day of search
Mid the old lumber in the gallery,
That mouldering chest was noticed ; and 'twas said
By one as young, as thoughtless as Ginevra,
'Why not remove it from its lurking-place ?'
'Twas done as soon as said ; but on the way
It burst, it fell ; and lo, a skeleton,
With here and there a pearl, an emerald-stone,
A golden clasp, clasping a shred of gold.
All else had perished—save a wedding-ring,
And a small seal, her mother's legacy,
Engraven with a name, the name of both,
'Ginevra.'

There then had she found a grave !
Within that chest had she concealed herself,
Fluttering with joy, the happiest of the happy ;
When a spring-lock, that lay in ambush there,
Fastened her down for ever !"

From this it appears that the incident in question was one of actual occurrence, and that a noble young lady, on her bridal eve, did actually escape the vigilance of her husband, and die in the manner described by the poet.